

# The Newark Evening News

COMES TO YOU ONCE AGAIN!

At  
The  
Newark  
Public Library

The New Jersey  
Information Center

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# Network Evening News

## MORGUE FILE PRESERVATION PROJECT

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# Overview

From 1883 to 1972 the *Newark Evening News* was the newspaper of record in northern New Jersey. After the paper's demise, The Newark Public Library was elected to receive its morgue collection of clippings and ancillary materials. That became possible with the help of John T. Cunningham, a well-known author and historian. This great collection is of critical interest to generalists, historians, attorneys, business executives, law enforcement professionals, students and educators.

For the past fifteen years the Library has worked to preserve it by transferring the nearly 2,000,000

delicate, brittle clippings to microfilm. An enormous amount of work was completed by our library staff members in the form of pasting, typing and organizing etc. And this is only the first phase of the preservation project. In phases two and three, 800,000 photographs and 380 index volumes will be preserved.

This Preservation project has been made possible by the New Jersey Historical Commission, the New Jersey State Library and the National Endowment for the Humanities all of whom have provided the crucial funds thus far.



# History

New Jersey's largest and most influential press has been published in Newark for the last century and a half. In the 19<sup>th</sup> Century the *Newark Daily Advertiser*, the *Sentinel of Freedom* and the *Newark Sunday Call* all preceded the Newark Evening News and its later Sunday edition, and the tradition continues with today's *Star-Ledger*. The *News* started with Wallace M. Scudder, who produced the first issue in a room at 844 Broad Street on September 1, 1883. By 1903 he became the newspaper's principal owner, and continued during the next three decades developing it into one of the nation's important regional news-papers. Douglas Eldridge, a former reporter, noted in his study of the paper that that during these years Cecil L. Dorian became the first American woman combat correspondent in the First World War, and Howard Garis developed the "Uncle Wiggily" children's series.

With Wallace Scudder's death in 1931 his son Edward W. Scudder Sr. assumed control for the next two decades. In 1926 Arthur J. Sinnott was named editor, and he was later succeeded by Lloyd Felmlly. According to

Bruce Rosen in his article "The Kingdom and the Power of the *Newark News*," "when you had a good news story, Felmlly would lean over your shoulder" and that he was "a nursemaid to his staff and political powerhouse to the State." It was during these "golden days" that circulation rose to a quarter of a million and cartoonist Luke Pease won the Pulitzer Prize for his work on John L. Lewis during a miners' strike. By 1946, the *News* had become a seven-day newspaper with the acquisition of the old *Newark Sunday Call*, and had established radio station WNJR and later WVNJ.

When Edward W. Scudder fell into poor health, control of the paper was passed to sons Edward W. Jr. and Richard B. Edward was made president and Richard became publisher.



The two men assumed complete control of the *Newark News*, the engraving

company, the radio station, and a newspaper recycling plant. Richard Scudder's experiments with recycling resulted in the establishment of the Garden State Paper Company and the building of its new plant at Garfield in 1961. His tremendous success in that venture was to have considerable impact upon the paper.

*What was the Newark Evening News?*

It was one of New Jersey's largest and longest running newspapers, which was published for almost a century beginning in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century and overlapping into the eighth decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. It was a newspaper which was as powerful as the State Legislature, and it had reporters in most of the state's court houses, major city halls, New York, and Washington, and assigned specialists where world news was developing. It was a force so powerful that the legislators would occasionally delay a vote in Trenton so as not to be immediately reported in the *Evening News*. It was a

newspaper which compared favorably with the *Washington Post*, the *Christian Science Monitor*, and the *Baltimore Sun*. It was traditional, distinguished, and moderately Republican and did not hesitate to send a wrongdoer into the sights of an investigation if necessary. It was often described as New Jersey's *New York Times* and was deeply mourned upon its demise in the 1970s. It was the paper that paperboys liked to deliver, reporters were proud to have written for and will always be remembered as New Jersey's "paper of record". According to a former editor it was a special service to the people of the state, not a money-making enterprise.

The *News* was renowned for its exhaustive coverage of state and local governments, and its reports from scores of correspondents throughout northern and central New Jersey. In its peak years the *News* was unrivaled in the breadth and depth of its daily portrait of New Jersey life.

# Decline and Fall

By the 1960s serious changes in Newark's situation could no longer be ignored. The city was losing a great deal of wealth and creativity to the suburbs, even to the whole northern tier of New Jersey. A sprawling metropolitan complex spread over several counties. The city, which had been Irish, German, Italian and Jewish, was getting an African-American and Hispanic majority. A tiny percentage of News staff and management were black, a point certainly noticed in a "minority" city on the eve of the riots of 1967.

The Scudder family situation was also changing. Three generations of newspaper management would not be succeeded by a fourth. They continued a paternalistic style and attitude which may have done the paper more harm than good in the long run, and which the newly formed union was to criticize. They were slow to adopt new technology, as symbolized by the continued use of Wallace Scudder's rolltop desk.

Another change that contributed to the demise of nearly all evening papers across the country was the difficulty of timely deliveries through afternoon traffic.

Efforts were made to respond to change and update the newspaper. Editor Felmy turned his attention to good government and largely through the paper's efforts the city's old commission form of government gave way to the mayor-council form in 1954. Still, many touchy issues such as race were sometimes ignored.

On May 20 1970, the Scudders sold the paper for approximately \$42 million, a sale which included the *Newark News*, the Garden State Paper Company and a small engraving company. Media General of Richmond, Virginia took over the paper's long-term debt of approximately \$5 million. The family kept the radio station until 1978.

After the sale attempts to streamline the *News* failed to attract new readers, and the paper steadily lost ground to the livelier *Star-Ledger*. Newsroom employee fears led to the formation of a union and soon to a long and crippling strike. Beginning in May 1971 the paper failed to publish during the six-month strike and for several months afterwards. In early 1972 the company announced the sale of the plant and the Sunday edition to the Newhouse Company and the paper to be printed at the *Star-Ledger* plant.

When the news resumed in April 1972 it was a shadow of its former self and "never made it to autumn". So ended a long and important chapter in American journalism. Newark, and most of New Jersey had been fortunate

to have had one of the nation's leading newspapers, and a link in a long chain of newspapers which continues today with the Star-Ledger as New Jersey's paper of record.



# The Newark Evening News at The Newark Public Library

In 1972 the Newark Public Library entered the scene at the suggestion of noted historian John T. Cunningham with a bid to add the *Newark News* morgue to the Library's New Jersey Room. Newspaper microfilm and selective clipping files had always been important as a basic source of state and local history, and this larger collection, millions of clippings, hundreds of thousands of pictures and 350 handwritten indexes, would add a whole new dimension to local research.

Acceptance of the gift from Media General gave the Library responsibility for removal of the materials to a storage area and the employment of part-time personnel to operate the collection. The Library employed a mover to take the materials out of the old *Newark News* Market Street building after bumping them down several flights of stairs, as the building had already been denuded of its freight elevators in a renovation. Thus began a thirty-year journey during which we have moved the collection to several different locations as free storage space has appeared and disappeared.

Our first home was in an NJIT warehouse on High Street; but after only a couple of years it became necessary to move. From High Street we moved to a location in the old Washington Street YWCA, adjoining the Newark Museum, but as museum expansion developed we again needed to move. While at the Y the collection was stored in its abandoned swimming pool, now the Billy Johnson Auditorium of the Museum. From there we went to the former rathskeller in the basement of Symphony Hall, a thoroughly safe location until a sudden flood which cost thousands of dollars for preservation, including some freeze-drying. At this point City Clerk Robert Marasco came to the rescue and provided storage in the City's Halsey Street warehouse. When it became necessary to move again, it was the former Business Library on Commerce Street with the New Jersey rare book collection. Each of these moves was difficult and costly, and each caused continued damage to the collection.

At the beginning we employed a nationally known consultant to review



our efforts and to evaluate the morgue. He concluded that it was one of the best in the country and we should try to save it at all costs. We then applied for and received grants to begin preserving the collection, which was already showing serious signs of deterioration. Money was to come from the National Endowment, the New Jersey State Library and the New Jersey Historical Commission. A detailed description of what followed is included in this report. At the same time public requests for information from the morgue clippings, pictures and indexes were ongoing. If it had not been for the understanding of various funding agencies and many friends, it would have been impossible to save the collection for future users. Partners in preservation started with the Newark Public Library's New Jersey Division, now the N.J. Information Center,

with the support of library directors from James Bryan in the 1970s to Dr. Alex Boyd at present. We were also befriended by Dr. Saul Fenster, president of the New Jersey Institute of Technology, Samuel C. Miller, director of The Newark Museum, Robert Marason, Newark City Clerk, and Bernard Bush, Richard Waldron and Marc Mappen of the New Jersey Historical Commission.

The New Jersey Historical Commission and the Newark Public Library have been partners in an ambitious preservation project to save a regional resource. How wonderful it would be if all of America's newspaper morgues were available to researchers.

Charles F. Cummings  
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The Newark Public Library  
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# Description

You might be asking: what is the *NEWARK EVENING NEWS* MORGUE FILE? Or, what is a newspaper morgue file in general?

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, most major newspapers had a selected group of workers clip out articles and separate them by subject. These "clippings" were placed in an envelope that was labeled according to the subject and dates. All subsequent articles of the same subject were then added to that envelope. The photographs were placed in a separate file.

The *Newark Evening News* started its morgue file in the early 1900's (circa 1905). News clippings in the morgue were grouped and labeled by the

*Newark News* staff during the paper's long run. This continued until the last edition hit the streets in 1972.

It is this awesome and extensive collection that the Newark Public Library has preserved and made available to the general public. The master copies of this material are stored off-site. Portions of this film can be purchased at the patron's request. The price is based on the expenses of the institution. The reels are available for \$100.00 each based on 2003 prices. Along with this, there will be access to it via index. The Newark Public Library is the only Library in the United States to have the *NEWARK EVENING NEWS* MORGUE FILE on microfilm by subject.



# Procedure

The process of converting the clippings from the Newark Evening News Morgue File onto reels of microfilm is a long, tedious and detailed operation. It begins with one of our part-time workers taking an envelope filled with clippings and systematically pasting them on large 18 x 24 manila sheets. This manila sheet serves as the backdrop for the actual filming of the articles. Each of the 18 x 24 manila sheets becomes one frame on a reel of microfilm.

The manila sheets are then collected by the supervising consultant and placed in alphabetical order by subject. Then they are brought over to the New Jersey Information Center to be typed into our computer index. After they are entered into our computer index, the pasted manila sheets are brought back over to the maintenance building to have a label pasted on the top and center of the sheet. The labels are generated from the computer index.

*Here are some examples of the entries in our computer index:*

## **Smallpox - 1926-1942**

This indicates that the articles in this section are on "Smallpox" from the years 1926 to 1942.

## **Robak, Chester L. - Attorney - Newark - 1941-**

This frame contains articles on Chester L. Robak, a Newark Attorney.

## **Potter, Thomas - Attorney - Princeton - 1948**

The articles in this frame of microfilm are on Thomas Potter, an Attorney from Princeton.

## **Nutley, N.J. - 1947**

The articles in this section are on the town of Nutley, New Jersey from 1947 on up to 1972.

## **Nutley, N.J. - Banks - 1937-**

The Articles in this section are on the banks in the town of Nutley, N.J. from 1937 on up to 1972.

## **Small, Don - East Orange - 1949**

This frame contains articles on Don Small in the year of 1949 only.

Now it is time for the alphabetized labeled manila sheets to be placed in a large cardboard box. Once a large box is filled with manila sheets it is kept in storage until we have at least 6 of these large boxes filled and ready to be shipped out. At that time we inform our microfilming company and they send a truck down to pick up the large boxes.

Our staff of workers have diligently pasted articles, typed entries into our computer index, and labeled completed manila sheets. These workers come to us from various backgrounds. We have had college students, retirees, as well as people from all walks of life working a second job to supplement their income.

## Funding

**T**he New Jersey Historical Commission has been exceedingly generous and supportive in funding this project which has been in the works since 1987. It was in the time period from July of 2000 to June of 2001 however that the project entered its first year of major funding. This funding has enabled the Library to acquire state-of-the-art equipment by which patrons can read, print

and electronically transfer the indexed film.

The Newark Public Library appreciates the support we have received from the New Jersey Historical Commission. In the long run however, it will be the general public who will be most grateful for this project which is a twentieth century archive of the State of New Jersey.

# Hodge

The general public will have access to the *NEWARK EVENING NEWS* MORGUE FILE MICROFILM COLLECTION directly by visiting the New Jersey Information Center of the Newark Public Library or by using the Internet.

The collection is listed alphabetically in a computer index using Microsoft Access Software. It will be through

this index that the public will be able to search for the specific person or topic that they are interested in researching. This can be done by the patron entering a search word. Here is one example: The patron will search for "attorneys". The index will give the patron an alphabetical list of attorneys. That list can be printed and/or copied by the patron.

*Here is a partial sample of that list:*

Pryga, Walter S. - Attorney - Rahway - 1953  
Rafferty, Joseph - Attorney - Glen Ridge - 1948-  
Reid, Alex F. Jr. - Attorney - Newark - 1928-  
Rinaldi, Mariano J. - Attorney - Newark - 1954-  
Serata, Isaac L. - Asst. U.S. Attorney - 1955-  
Shoobe, Joel L. - Attorney - Orange - 1964  
Siegler, Irving - Attorney - Newark - 1932-  
Smith, Frederick E. - Attorney General - 1918-

You will see that all of the above entries contain the word "Attorney".

Fortunately, Historical Commission funding has enabled the Library to acquire state-of-the-art equipment by which patrons can read, print and electronically transfer the indexed

film. Microfilm readers are available in the New Jersey Informational Center, whose staff has been trained in their use.

# Future

Nobody knows what the future will bring. As a youth, I would rush home from playing baseball in the park to read the *Newark Evening News*. The delivery boy, as they were referred to in those days, would flip the newspaper onto our front porch between 4 P.M. and 5 P.M. each and every weekday afternoon. Back then, I never imagined in my wildest dreams that such a great newspaper would someday cease to publish.

Now in the twenty-first century, there is no telling what new type of technology will be available to the many people from all walks of life that will have access to this great collection.

The microfilming of the nearly 3,000,000 delicate, brittle clippings from the morgue file is only the first of three phases of the *Newark News* Preservation Project. In phases two and three, 800,000 photographs and 380 index volumes will be digitized.

Our dream of preserving the *NEWARK EVENING NEWS MORGUE FILE* and making it accessible to the public is now a reality.

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